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THE

DISCUSSION ON REUNION:

A REVIEW.

BY

SAMUEL J. BAIRD,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, RONCEVERTE, W. VA.

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THE DISCUSSION ON REUNION.

THE present writer was a member of our late General Assembly; but not being one of those selected to conduct the debate, he was a silent witness of the discussion on reunion. A sense of duty has led to the preparation of the present paper, which was ready for the press when the Open Letter of Dr. Palmer and other brethren came to hand. That letter presents nothing to render necessary a reconstruction of the argument, although occasional references to it have been introduced.

When the Assembly met, it soon appeared that at least three parties were in the body. First, and probably the most numerous, were those who had no wish to raise the question of the reunion of the churches, but desired to see the relations between them established on a more satisfactory basis of mutual confidence and co-operation; second, were those opposed to any nearer approximation of the churches; and third, were some who were ready for immediate organic union. This was probably the smallest of the three classes. It soon appeared, moreover, that it was the purpose of at least *some* of the second class to force the issue to a division of the Church. One, than whom no other has a better title to respectful audience from the Church, said to me,—"I consider a division on this question inevitable, and the sooner the better," and therefore indicated his intention to pursue that object in the discussion.

It was the obvious dictate of policy to those who entertained such views to force the issue on the naked question of union; and in this they in a great measure succeeded. It was the conviction of the writer that true wisdom forbade the prominence given to that question, for several reasons. Not the least weighty of these was the fact that the present agitation of it was certain, as the result proved, to divert attention from that which was of pressing necessity, and was immediately practicable—the readjustment of our relations with the Northern Church. Such a readjustment was recommended by three vital considerations: *First*, To some of us it was of pressing concern, because we could not feel justified to our own consciences as to the course heretofore pursued toward our sister Church; *Second*, By this means the tension which is so painfully felt on the border might have been materially relieved, and much of the consequent uneasiness quieted; *Third*, This is the only rational way of deciding the desirableness of reunion. That point can never be ascertained except by the intimate mutual knowledge acquired by intimate relations. If desirable, such experiment would induce general conviction of that fact and consequent action. If union should prove unde-

sirable, still, it seems to me, that the attitude required by the charity of the Gospel—the only attitude consistent with true Christian manliness and self-respect—is that here indicated. The jealousy and reserve heretofore maintained look like the products of conscious weakness.

But all this goes upon the assumption that the arguments urged to justify distrust, and even hostility, toward the Northern Church are invalid or insufficient. Those chiefly relied on may be enumerated somewhat after the order of their importance, as follows: 1, That the Northern Church is deliberately derelict from the principles of her own Constitution and of the Presbyterian polity in the organization of her benevolent Boards; 2, That she holds unscriptural moral principles on the subject of slavery; 3, That, in the reunion of the Old and New School, she established latitudinarian principles concerning the doctrines of grace; and 4, That she is guilty of treason to the crown rights of the Lord Jesus by mixing religion and politics.

I. *The Board Question.*

On this subject, it is unnecessary to enter upon the particulars of the discussion in our Assembly, as the whole of it was a mistake,—a groping reminiscence of a condition of things and a controversy which have been obsolete and forgotten for more than a quarter of a century. Formerly the Boards had two classes of members. The regular members were as numerous, in some cases, as one hundred and twenty, scattered over the Church, of whom those only who lived near the seat of operations were expected to meet. By this undefined element in each Board, an executive committee was appointed to do the work. Beside these regular members, there was a class of honorary members, consisting of such as purchased the dignity by the payment of a certain sum of money into the treasury of the Board. These were entitled to sit and deliberate, but not to vote. Nominally the Board was responsible to the Assembly, and the Executive Committee to the Board. But, constituted as they were, there was no adequate responsibility anywhere. This was the system the distinction between which and a responsible executive "was regarded by such men as Thornwell, Stuart Robinson, and Robert J. Breckinridge, as of high importance," as Dr. Vaughan stated. It was liable to serious abuses, and gave occasion to much dissatisfaction. But, partly in consequence of the discussion in the Assembly in 1860, in which Thornwell took a leading part, and partly on occasion of the reunion in 1869, the Boards were so modified as to differ from our Executive Committees only in name. The average number of members is about fifteen. There are no honorary members entitled to take part in their deliberations or control, although a class so called are connected with the Board of Publication, whose only prerogative, however, is to draw annually a certain amount of books, in consideration of certain sums by them contributed to its treasury. Each Board is strictly an executive committee appointed by the General Assembly, responsible to it, and under its absolute control. This was illustrated in the last Assembly by the complete reorganization of the Board of Publication,

and its reduction from forty-eight members to twenty-four. As to a double authority operating in the Presbyteries in the matter of Home Missions, the case is exactly the same as in connection with our Committee of Home Missions. The law of the Northern Church on that subject is in these words:

"Within the bounds of a Presbytery the work of the Board of Home Missions should be carried on in harmony with the Presbytery, according to principles and rules hereinafter stated; but a discretion should be allowed to the Board in outlying districts, where direct presbyterial control is difficult or impracticable.

"The Board should not, in ordinary cases, decline to grant an appropriation recommended by a Presbytery, unless in its judgment, after viewing the whole field to be supplied, it shall appear that the funds at its disposal are all needed for more deserving or more promising work; and, whether it does thus appear, must be determined by the Board. But in all questions touching the organization of churches or the character of ministers, the Board, in case of difference between itself and the Presbytery, should abide by the final judgment of the Presbytery.

"No church shall be organized by a missionary within the limits of any Presbytery unless authority has previously been obtained from the Presbytery."

Thus have we the exact system of policy that is pursued by our own Church through its Committee of Missions. There is, however, one additional feature which is worthy of our imitation.

"Each Synod shall appoint a Home Missionary Committee, to consist of the chairmen of the presbyterial committees within its bounds."

The business of these synodical committees is to adjust and equalize the salaries and distribution of missionaries through their bounds, etc. (*Minutes* of 1883, p. 634.) As to the dual authority within our Presbyteries, in which Dr. Smoot found such a bugbear, every one knows that there must be a measure of discretion lodged with the Committee of Missions as to the distribution of the funds among the Presbyteries; otherwise the first comers would receive all, and those who were late in the scramble be left with nothing. That there is inconvenience and occasional friction consequent on this, is of course; but the alternative is to submit to such minor embarrassments, or to abandon the whole work of Domestic Missions, except in the narrow limits of Presbyteries. In his latest utterance on the subject, Dr. Smoot at last finds the distinguishing point between the Board and our Committee.

"Certainly our Committee never attempted in Texas or Alabama to 'issue an agreement' between the Committee and any minister in any Presbytery as to the amount to be paid him. If Mr. Lapsley will look at this point a moment, he will see a wide difference." (*Christian Observer*, Aug. 24.)

Yes, that is the difference! When a Presbytery has recommended a missionary to the Board, the latter sends the man an agreement to pay him the sum promised! Should our Committee do the like, it is left to imagination to conceive the disastrous results!

It seems to be thought that there is something malignant in the very na-

ture of a Board. "What is the difference between a Board and a Committee?" asked a member. "A Board is chartered, and a Committee is not," was the reply from the platform. The respondent was not aware that our Committee of Publication is a chartered institution, so declared by courts of law. What is the difference? Nothing whatever, except the reference of the names. A Committee is named from the *committing* of business to it; a Board, from the *table* at which it sits, transacting the business.

We can now see the full value of the assertion that the Northern Assembly is guilty of conscious and deliberate violation of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism in the organization of her Boards. Equally imaginary are most of the other points which have been insisted on.

II. *The Slavery Question.*

Dr. Vaughan urged that we are bound to maintain a testimony in opposition to the Northern Church touching slavery. On this subject, I am at a loss to see upon what point or in what way the issue is to be made. The deliverances of 1818 and 1845 embody the present testimony of that Church. From it the Old School never departed; and, if the New School Assembly adopted any sentiments, before or during the war, at variance with that deliverance (of which I am not aware), the "Concurrent Declaration" in the terms of union annulled the action. Since 1869 the re-united church has taken no action on the subject. According, therefore, to the terms of union, she stands on the old testimonies; the freedom of which from any fanatical taint is guaranteed by the fact that that of 1818 was drafted by a committee of three, of which Dr. Baxter, of Virginia, was a member, and unanimously adopted, in an Assembly in which was a full representation from the South. With it that of 1845 was in perfect accord.

That there are fanatics who hold unscriptural views on this subject is true, and some of them may belong to the Presbyterian Church. But that the Church, as a body, justly lies under this charge, is an assumption for which no proof has been adduced, and, I am convinced, there is none to be found. As now constituted of the two branches, re-united, she certainly has not made herself responsible for such views.

III. *Union of the Old and New School.*

It was urged with great emphasis by Dr. Palmer and others that the union of the Old School with the New, in 1869, introduced Pelagian heresies and broad church principles into the united body. The point is insisted on in the Open Letter. The writer of this paper may, without immodesty, claim to speak with some intelligence on this subject, having been a deeply interested observer of the New School controversy, from the sitting of the Act and Testimony Convention and Assembly in 1835, at which he was personally present, as a spectator, until its close; and an active participant in the reunion discussion, in its earlier stages. In the New School controversy, theological questions, perhaps, made more noise than any other. But the number

of those who embraced Pelagian error was comparatively small. The primary source of all the trouble was the "Plan of Union" of 1801, by which many Congregational ministers and churches were admitted into the Presbyterian Church, without adopting her standards. Among these, the unsound theology of New England found shelter. In the Presbyteries and Synods which sprang up under the covert of the plan, the evangelical agencies of the church were opposed, in favor of the Congregational or voluntary societies. When the division finally took place, in 1838, all these subjects entered into the issue; and in addition was the question of the propriety and lawfulness of the "exscinding acts" of the Assembly of 1837, by which three Synods were disowned as being not Presbyterian, but Congregational bodies.

Thus, the New School branch of the church originally included, (1), The Congregational elements which had come in under the plan of union; (2), Such as preferred the American missionary and other voluntary societies, rather than the institutions of the church; (3), Those who were tainted with Pelagian theology; (4), Those who refused to recognize the validity of the disowning acts. No sooner had the separation taken place, than powerful influences began to operate to purge the unsound elements out of the New School body. On the one hand, the great majority, being sound in the faith, were impelled to vindicate that character by the exercise of an unwonted coldness and reserve toward such as deviated from the standards, in either doctrine or order. On the other, the state of movement caused by the division of 1838 impelled the Congregational elements toward their own system, so that they, withdrawing from their late allies, formed Associations after the Congregational plan. Soon the New School body became dissatisfied with its experience of the voluntary societies, and established agencies of its own for the conduct of education, missions, etc., thus removing one of the chief causes of the separation. This change also tended to a further elimination of the Congregational and unsound elements from the Church. The result was, that when the two branches of the church reunited, there were very few remaining of the known teachers of error; and of the younger generation of preachers, graduates of Auburn and of Union, in New York, the standard of orthodoxy was probably to the full as high as of those of the Old School seminaries. In fact, the opposition to Pelagian heresy is nowhere more pronounced than in the instructions of Drs. Smith and Shedd, successive professors of theology in Union.

It is said that, if but few unsound theologians were embraced in the reunited Church, yet the rule for the adoption of the Confession was corrupted by the acceptance of loose principles of interpretation. A careful examination of the facts will show this to be a mistake. The first motion toward reunion was made by the Old School Assembly and responded to by the New, in 1866, by the concurrent appointment of committees of conference. These, the next year, reported a plan of union, of which the doctrinal article was in these words:

"The reunion shall be effected on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards. The Confession shall continue to be sincerely received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and its fair historical sense, as it is accepted by the two bodies in opposition to Antinomianism and Fatalism, on the one hand, and to Arminianism and Pelagianism on the other, is to be regarded as the sense in which it is received and adopted."

The committees advised that the report be published and lie over for a year, for the consideration of the churches. This was done, and the committees continued, to report to the next year's Assemblies. In 1868 the joint committee submitted amended terms. In them the doctrinal article read as follows:

"The reunion shall be effected on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards; the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be acknowledged to be the inspired Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice; the Confession of Faith shall continue to be sincerely received and adopted, 'as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures,' it being understood that this Confession is received in its proper historical—that is, the Calvinistic or Reformed—sense; it is also understood that various methods of viewing, stating, explaining, and illustrating the doctrines of the Confession, which do not impair the integrity of the Reformed or Calvinistic system, are to be freely allowed in the united Church, as they have hitherto been allowed in the separate Churches."

In the New School Assembly the report was approved and sent down to the Presbyteries for consideration. The Old School Assembly also approved it, rejecting various proposed amendments to the doctrinal basis. Against this action a Protest was entered, "not against the reunion of the two branches of our Church, nor against the measures inaugurated for the accomplishment of that object, but simply against the terms of union approved by the Assembly and its action in relation to them." The protestors then recite the first article, as above. Of it they declare that "under this term of the compact we shall be bound to allow all those forms of doctrine which the New School Church has hitherto allowed. This interpretation the article in question will, in our judgment, fairly admit; it is so interpreted by the other party to the contract, and it is so understood by the public." Referring to the Old School testimony of 1837, the Protesters thence specified eight doctrinal errors of the New School, to which they objected. In an Answer to this Protest, the Assembly said:

"These doctrinal errors, the authors of the protest are careful to say, are repudiated by the great mass of the New School church. They say that 'they are far from believing or insinuating that these doctrines are generally approved by the New School church;' that 'they do not impute these errors to a majority, or to any definite proportion of our New School brethren.' The charge that is made in the Protest, and the only charge made in this reference, is that while the other branch of the Presbyterian Church repudiates these doctrines, for themselves, they, at the same time, hold that they are *consistent with the Calvinism of the Confession of Faith.* The authors of the Protest allege that

it is the judgment of the New School body that a person can logically and consistently accept the Westminster symbol and these nine or ten Pelagian tenets at one and the same time. This is the substance of the charge. The Assembly pronounces this allegation to be without foundation," and gives its reasons: (1.) The position attributed to the New School "would simply be self-stultifying and absurd." (2.) "These very errors, charged by the signers of the protest as allowed by the New School Presbyterians, have already been distinctly repudiated by them," in the Auburn Declaration. (3.) "Any instances of laxity of doctrine among the New School are exceptional cases." (4.) "That the allegation of this Protest is unfounded is proven by the fact that the New School church have adopted, by unanimous vote, the basis of doctrine presented by the Joint Committee. Whatever may be the preferences and opinions of individuals respecting particular clauses in the first article of this basis, this General Assembly holds and affirms that it not only commits, but *binds* any ecclesiastical body that should receive it to pure and genuine Calvinism." (5.) "The errors alleged in the protest are combated and refuted in the theological seminaries of the New School."

These, and other points to the same effect, are fully discussed in the Answer. Among other things, the Assembly says:

"It must be distinctly observed that if any doctrines had been hitherto allowed by the New School body, which 'impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system,' they are not to be allowed in the united church, under the terms of union. Such doctrines are *condemned*, and any one who may teach them will be *subject to discipline*. It is the testimony of some of the protesters themselves that the great body of the New School are sound in doctrine; our own body, being the large majority in the union, when fortified by the accession of the great body of sound men in the other, *will establish and confirm the testimony of the church to the truth*, will preserve it, by God's help, intact, while it extends the purifying and saving power of our venerated Confession."

It thus distinctly appears that both the protesters and the majority were of one mind, to maintain the purity of doctrine, with no taint of broad churchism, and with express respect to the Old School testimony of 1837. Subsequently, during the same sessions, the Old School Assembly, in deference to the views of the protesters, proposed to the other the omission of the obnoxious clause, so as to make the article read thus:

"The reunion shall be effected on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards; the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be acknowledged to be the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; the Confession of Faith shall continue to be sincerely received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy Scriptures; and the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States shall be approved as containing the principles and rules of our polity."

The proposal for this amendment reached the New School Assembly too late for action. The terms, therefore, as contemplated in the Protest and Answer, went down to the Presbyteries, while these two documents were published and known to all. As the result, thirty-eight Old School Presbyteries consented to the doctrinal basis, while all of these but one declared their pre-

ference for the standards pure and simple. One hundred and five rejected the basis, most of them declaring a readiness to unite on the standards. Of the New School Presbyteries, one hundred answered in the affirmative and four in the negative, the Presbytery of Knox providing "that all reasonable liberty in interpretation be not relinquished;" and that of Philadelphia Fourth, reserving "all reasonable liberty in the statement of views and the interpretation of the standards, not impairing the integrity of the Calvinistic system." On the reception of these returns, in May, 1869, the Assemblies united in adopting and sending down the amended basis, as above recited, being the standards, without reservation. At the special meeting held in the following November, one hundred and twenty-six Old School Presbyteries reported in the affirmative, three in the negative. Eleven (some of them in foreign lands) made no report. Of the one hundred and thirteen Presbyteries of the New School church, one hundred and ten were unanimous in the affirmative, while three reported each *one dissenting vote*. Upon this basis the union was consummated.

Here, therefore, be it noted:

First, In neither form of the explanatory clause is there a loophole left open for the entrance of New School error. During the progress of the New School controversy, that party, by way of foil to the charge of harboring Arminian and Pelagian errrors, had accused the Old School of leaning toward Antinomianism and Fatalism. In the first draft, therefore, both classes of errors were expressly excluded. In the second form, these specifications were omitted. But liberty in stating and explaining the doctrines of the Confession was expressly limited so as "not to impair the integrity of the Reformed or Calvinistic system." That such liberty is necessary and has been always allowed, will at once appear to any who will reflect, for example, on the modes of explaining the transmission of original sin.

Second, The first form of the explanatory clause was not adopted by the Assembly, nor sent down for the vote of the Presbyteries. The second, which was accompanied with the Protest and Answer, was overwhelmingly rejected by the Old School Presbyteries. And the Answer shows that, by the Assembly itself, it had not been accepted in the interest of a loose theology.

Third. The Protest was a specific exposition of doctrinal errors, referred to the testimony of 1837, and the Answer was an elaborate denial that those errors were now countenanced by the New School church, or *could be recognized by any one as consistent with the system of doctrines of the Confession*. To the present purpose it is immaterial whether the assertions and arguments of the Answer were correct or not. It went forth to both branches of the Church as an explicit and authoritative exposition of the sense in which the Old School were negotiating the union—the sense in which they understood the New School to be entering into it. It declared their *purpose*, in concert with the orthodox of the New School, to *enforce discipline against errorists*, and to "*confirm the testimony of the Church to the truth*"—the testimony, to-wit, of 1837, as cited in the Protest.

Fourth. After a year and six months' consideration of the announcement thus distinctly made, and *endorsed by the Old School Presbyteries' rejection of the exceptionable basis*, the New School church adopted the terms, accepting the standards, pure and simple, wanting but three voices of absolute unanimity in all the Presbyteries, without a hint of question or exception on this point, and thus committed itself wittingly, fully and irretrievably to that, as the accepted interpretation of the treaty.

Fifth. The *Princeton Review* for July, 1867, had a review of the Assembly of that year, and of the plan of union, (the first draught) as received and published by that Assembly. The October number of the *American Presbyterian and Theological Review*, the organ of the New School church, contained a reply from the pen of Rev. Dr. Henry B. Smith, Professor of Theology in Union Seminary, New York, which was reprinted in pamphlet form and extensively circulated. In it, the principle of loose subscription is indignantly repudiated.

"We hold with him [Dr. Hodge] that it is 'wrong,' that it 'will work great evil,' and that 'it is utterly inconsistent with the principles and the obligations,' he says, 'of the Old School body,' we say,—of the Presbyterian church." Again, "We utterly and unanimously disavow the principle of subscription which he imputes to us."—*Pamphlet edition*, p. 44.

In a foot-note to p. 33, he says:

"Dr. Monfort in *The Presbyter* argues well and ably that the paper on doctrinal errors, adopted by the Assembly of 1837, is the common property of both branches; the New School never repealed it."

From these things it clearly appears that what was done, was done wittingly by both parties.

Of these transactions, Dr. Palmer says that—

"The union was constituted in such a way as completely to cut out from the history and from the records of the Church all the testimonies of 1837 and 1838," and speaks of the "trying surgical operation" by which it was done.

Dr. Dabney, too, in his letter to Dr. Vaughan, says that—

"In 1869 the Northern Church fused with the New School on such terms as constituted a surrender of all for which we and our fathers strove in 1837-'8. The church thus formed distinctly forsook our testimonies for sound doctrine, and virtually pronounced itself a broad church, by covenanting that all the varying versions of doctrine which had been in currency in either branch should have full recognition in the fused church."

It is not an unreasonable demand on behalf of our Church that brethren who undertake to instruct her on the great issues now pending should be at the trouble to make sure of the accuracy of the facts on which they found their conclusions. We shall have occasion more than once hereafter to regret that these brethren have failed to appreciate this obligation. The proposed form of the article on the adopting of the Confession, of which Dr.

Dabney gives a distorted version, was not adopted, as he asserts, but overwhelmingly *rejected* by the Old School Presbyteries, and neither it nor anything like it was incorporated in the covenant of union. The assertions of the brethren do grievous injustice, not only to the Old School church, but to the cause of orthodoxy itself. By the Protest and Answer, the rejection and amendment of the terms, and the final form adopted in the light of these things, *the testimony of* 1837 *was confirmed and established by the whole authority of the united Church*. The Protest and Answer, therefore, appropriately occupy a place as part and parcel of the whole transaction in the Digest published by authority of the united Assembly in 1886, pages 81-86. Dr. Palmer says:

"We are invited to join a body against the formation of which such a Protest was offered by such men."

But what says the protest itself?

"We *do not* protest against the reunion of the two branches of our Church, nor against the measures inaugurated for the accomplishment of that object; but simply against the terms of union approved by the Assembly,"—

Terms which were rejected by the Presbyteries, and abandoned, as we have seen. The record, when carefully examined, exhibits no trace of the trying surgical operation which Dr. Palmer described, cutting out the old testimonies; nor a footprint of the process through which, "step by step," the *index expurgatorius* was constructed. He referred to the Concurrent Declaration as effecting the excision. In the Open Letter another document is introduced as auxiliary to that end. The Letter quotes as follows:

"The publications of the Board of Publication (O. S.) and of the Publication Committee (N. S.) shall continue to be issued as at present; leaving it to the Board of Publication of the united church to revise these issues, and perfect a catalogue of the united church, so as to exclude invidious references to past controversies." Again: "'And no rule or precedent which does not stand approved by both the bodies should be of any authority, until re-established in the united body; except in so far as such rule or precedent may affect the rights of property founded thereon.' We group together these expunging 'declarations' because they sweep the field of the past clean to the very horizon. What becomes of all the acts and testimonies of the Old School body in the great semi-Pelagian controversy of 1837? Under the first, every book and tract issued by the Board in defense or explanation of Old School positions, as a witness for the doctrines of grace, must be expurgated so as to exclude anything which might be construed as offensive to the other party. And if the last 'declaration' be pressed to its ultimate reach, it surely cuts through even to the 'exscinding acts' themselves, and to the famous Act and and Testimony, and potentially repeals every deliverance of the Old School church up to the genesis of the schism."

It is surprising that the writer of this did not see that the very statement of his argument constitutes it a *reductio ad absurdam* of his position. That, in the light of the history, here traced, of the Protest and its dependent facts, a provision "to exclude invidious references to past controversies" from the

publications of the Board should be interpreted as it is in this paragraph, is indeed marvellous. That the Board of Publication and the church by which it is controlled did not so understand it is easily seen in its present catalogue, in which (to go no farther) appears a series of Digests in which are to be found every, even the most "invidious," of the testimonies and documents here referred to, not excepting the Act and Testimony itself, which, however important, did not belong to the records of the Assembly. Of how little significance the second declaration here quoted, to the present purpose, appears from the fact that the terms of union *were* "approved of by both the bodies;" and that, *in the light of the Protest and Answer*, and of the foregoing facts. In the negotiations for reunion, the two churches—as not being intimately known to each other—wisely employed several years in preliminary tentative correspondence,—an example which our church will do well to regard. But, of the challenge or surrender of one doctrine or testimony there is not an intimation. At last, the union was formed on the very terms on which our own church received the United Synod,—terms against which, in that case also, Dr. Palmer entered his dissent.—*Minutes*, 1864, p. 277. In the negotiations, the Presbyteries, with whom, and not with the Assembly, the decision lay, *never agreed to anything but the standards* pure and simple, and that too *in the light of the Protest and Answer*.

The foregoing facts are beyond question, and the inference is impregnable. The union was no betrayal of the precious faith of our standards, nor of the Old School testimonies thereto, but was the rearing of a grand monolithic column of testimony to it. And our brethren in asserting the contrary, so far from serving the cause of orthodoxy, are exerting an influence to silence the testimony and remove the column from its base.

IV. *Political Action.—Our Own Record.*

Before entering on an examination of the political deliverances of the northern church, candor requires that we ascertain from what standpoint we make our scrutiny,—what is our own record in this behalf? This branch of the subject I approach with reluctance. I am aware how invidious is the office of discussing the errors of the church to which I belong, and to which I have devoted many years of my life's best energies. But our present circumstances, the interests of distressed churches, the honor of Christ's name, and the harmony and efficiency of his church, demand all plainness of speech as to every aspect of the subject now discussed. In every arraignment of the northern church,—in every argument opposed to closer relations,—the unimpeachable fidelity of our church to her spiritual constitution and Head has been asserted, or assumed, as fundamental to the case. Hence, we must avoid the clasp of her hand, as soiling to ours, and hence, we derive commission, as elect and sole witnesses, to testify against her infidelity to her trust. We are thus brought to the alternative of accepting as true these asserted facts and the deductions from them, or of meeting the issue thus made, and examining the facts, in the light of truth and candor. The issues involved concern not

our own particular church alone, but the whole church and cause of Christ in the world; and in discussing them, the controlling principle and motive should be, Christ's cause first; and the church, as, and so far as, it follows him.

Before looking into the records of our General Assembly, let us notice certain preliminary matters. There are some favored servants of God, whose eminent gifts and great and faithful services render their record part of the history of the church. Of these are Drs. Palmer and Dabney. Since the day when, in the General Assembly of 1853, I had the honor of introduction, by Robert J. Breckinridge, to the then rising young doctor of Columbia, I have rejoiced in the ever increasing honor and usefulness with which God has crowned him. May they last forever. Than he, no man fills a place more conspicuous in the eyes of the church, or more influential in this discussion. Some of us remember a time, years ago, when, in the heat of a political agitation, in which the issues of our nation's existence or destruction trembled doubtfully in the balance, a prince of the pulpit, under the gaze of an anxiously waiting throng, ascended the sacred place,—sacred to the peace-speaking gospel of the blessed God. From that post of vantage, with giant energy, he hurled a thunderbolt designed to sever the ties of national union, to dislodge a state from her peaceful moorings, and launch her on the stormy tide of revolution and war. Never since, so far as the public is aware, has there been, from that brother, a whisper of regret or doubt as to the use then made of the sacred desk. When, therefore, such an one declares that he will rend asunder the church of God rather than consent to union with our mother church, because she, a little while after, following his example, defiled her hands with politics, it becomes us to consider whether the passions that ruled that time of strife and bitterness are still to prevail. Dr. Palmer says that "a Christian man cannot carry a resentment for twenty-five years." But does he deny that *prejudices* born of resentments may be undying? And may they not be so insidious, even in Christian hearts, as, unconsciously, to exert a powerful and ever controlling influence over the judgment? Dr. Palmer's discourse preceded by some months the action of the Assembly of 1861, and was the first public fact, in the history of aberration on this subject, in our church, north and south.

Dr. Dabney has been very earnest in denouncing the political aberrations of the Northern Assembly. In 1861 the Synod of Virginia adopted a report from a committee of which he was a member, from which this is an extract:

"The conditions of the above act [the Spring resolutions] are such that it necessarily sunders our ecclesiastical connexion with that body—because it violates the Confession of Faith, chap. xxxi. § 4; because the question of civic allegiance upon which this Assembly has presumed to decide, has been properly determined as to us, by the act of the commonwealth of which we are citizens; because the war waged against us by the federal government of the United States is unjust, tyrannical, and barbarous, both in its pretexts and its conduct; and because the assertion of their rights and separate independence by the Confederate States of America is necessary and righteous."—*Printed Minutes of Synod of Virginia*, 1861, p. 285.

Here, it is evident that the violation of the doctrine of our standards, as to the functions of synods and councils, although alluded to, was a very venal offense in the judgment of Dr. Dabney and the Synod; for they instantly proceed to perpetrate the same offense. The Assembly had, indeed, sinned in deciding the political question. But, worse than that, she decided it *wrong*, and the Doctor and the Synod,—the spirituality of the church notwithstanding,—hastened to set the point right. The federal cause is "*unjust, tyrannical and barbarous;*" the secession movement "*necessary and righteous.*" Can any one, who has read our brother's recent utterances, in which the *sibboleth* of sectional and political animosity toward the Yankee betrays itself, in every line, doubt that the same passions and prejudices which then ruled his judgment and guided his pen still predominate?

In this discussion, Drs. Palmer and Dabney are recognized as *facile principes*, entitled to rank as the leaders and representatives of the views which, on this question, they espouse. Having fulfilled a ministry nearly parallel in years with the elder of the two, and being probably nearer the end of the course than either, I have felt it my privilege and duty, while with heartfelt respect, yet with perfect plainness, to state in this paper my convictions respecting their views and policy, as affecting the welfare of our church and the great interests of Christ's cause in the world. All honor to our venerable brethren for the gifts and graces with which God has abundantly endowed them, and the invaluable services which they have done for the church and her Master. But even they may be deceived by the spirit of the darkness of this world coming in the guize of an angel of light.

The Convention by which our first Assembly was called met in Atlanta, August 15th, 1861. In a document adopted and published by it, as the fundamental act for the organizing of our church as a separate body, the ground of separation is stated as follows:

"At a meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America held in Philadelphia, in May last, the following minute was adopted, to-wit:

"'That this General Assembly, in the spirit of that Christian patriotism which the Scriptures enjoin and which has always characterized this church, do hereby acknowledge and declare our obligations to promote and perpetuate, so far as in us lies, the integrity of these United States, and to strengthen, uphold and encourage the federal government in the exercise of all its functions, under our noble constitution; and to this Constitution, in all its provisions, requirements and principles, we profess our unabated loyalty. And to avoid all misconception, the Assembly declare that, by the terms 'Federal Government,' here used, is not meant any particular administration, or the peculiar opinions of any party, but that central administration, which being, at any time appointed and inaugurated according to the forms prescribed in the Constitution of the United States, is the visible representative of our national existence.'"—*Minutes*, 1861, p. 329.

This is so much of the "Spring resolutions" as involved political partisanship by the Assembly. Of it the Convention proceeds to say:

"By this act of the Assembly a large proportion of the churches under its care felt themselves aggrieved; not because they disputed the right of the Assembly to give a deliverance upon any question of duty, growing out of their various relations, civil, social and ecclesiastical; but because, during a state of war between two sections of the *Confederacy* formerly known as the United States of America, one of which *had found it necessary* to withdraw from the other, and to establish an independent government of its own, and to *resort to arms in maintenance of its rights, and in defense against threatened invasion of barbaric character*, the Assembly assumed the right of determining the political status of every member of every church under its care, a right inherent in the state and not in the church; and in the assumption of this right, enjoined upon said members the performance of acts which, as to those residing within the Confederate States were absolutely treasonable, in view of the political relations established for them by those states."

Thus, in the very act of condemning the political character of the Spring resolutions, the Convention proclaims itself a partisan of the "confederate" theory of the Constitution of the United States, and of the states rights party in the war. Here, as in other quotations following, I have invited attention to certain passages by putting them in italics. The Convention proceeded, among other things, to make the following deliverance:

"This Convention *does not* assume to itself, nor does it claim for the church of Christ, *the right to determine the political relations of individuals, or to solve for them political questions*. But this convention has a country that it calls its own; that country is known as the Confederate States of America, and *to it this convention holds to be due our strongest affections* and our greatest energies. . . . . If the voice of this Convention can be heard, it would say to all within the compass of it: Up, quit you like men, be strong. Pour your treasures into the lap of your country; throw your stout arms around her; let her feel the tendrils of enduring affection winding around her heart, and if need be, let your blood flow like water, *if the ark of the covenant cannot be buoyed up except on a gory flood*."

The Assembly called by this Convention met on December 4th of the same year, 1861. Opened with Palmer's noble sermon on the Headship of Christ, and presided over by him, and in Thornwell's watchful presence, it in a great measure avoided the mistake of the Convention. It, however, did not fail to identify itself with the Confederate cause.

"The Assembly met and spent the first half hour in special prayer for the blessing of God upon *the cause of the Confederate States*, according to previous order."—*Minutes*, p. 12.

In 1862, the Assembly declares that—

"We distinctly recognize the right of the state to claim the services of any or all of her citizens in the time of her need. We also acknowledge it as *a high privilege*, as well as *a plain duty*, for our people to pledge to each other and the government of their choice, their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, in united efforts to drive back the invaders of our soil and the enemies of our institutions."—*Minutes*, p. 19.

The same year, the Narrative, reported by Dr. Girardeau, gives first attention to this subject:

"I. *The Relation of our Congregations to the Great Struggle in which we are Engaged.*—All of the Presbyterial Narratives, *without exception*, mention the fact that their congregations have evinced the most cordial sympathy with the people of the Confederate States in their efforts to maintain their cherished rights and institutions against the despotic power which is attempting to crush them. Deeply convinced that this struggle *is not alone for civil rights* and property and home, but also *for religion, for the church, for the gospel*, and for existence itself, the churches in our connection have freely contributed to its prosecution of their substance. their prayers, and above all, of their members and the beloved youth of their congregations. . . . . The Assembly desires to record, *with its solemn approval*, this fact of the unanimity of our people in supporting a contest *to which religion, as well as patriotism*, now summons the citizens of this country, and to implore for them the blessing of God, in the course which they are now pursuing."—*Minutes*, p. 21, 22.

Again, in 1863, the Assembly says:

"The blood of our brethren, our fathers, and our children, unjustly and untimely slain, cries to Heaven. A considerable portion of our territory is in the possession of the enemy, and all communication with the churches embraced in those districts must, for the time, be suspended. We look forward, however, with cheerful confidence to a renewal of our relations to those churches, when, by the favor of our God, the enemy shall have been expelled."—*Minutes*, p. 155.

In the Minutes of 1864 we find the following utterance:

"The wonderful work of grace in our armies presents the strongest encouragement to the praying people at home, and has placed the seal of *divine approbation on our righteous cause.*"—*Minutes*, p. 292.

These selections are made sufficient in number and fulness to show that they were not mere casual expressions, as has been said, inadvertently admitted to record, but deliberate and characteristic utterances of the mind of those Assemblies. Respecting them these points are to be marked:

1. They do not rest in the apostle's injunction of obedience to the powers that be; but proceed to judge of the legitimacy and righteousness of the Confederate cause, as against the government of the United States. To it the Convention holds to be due "our strongest affections, and our greatest energies." The Assembly accounts it "a high privilege, as well as *a plain duty*" for the people to support it. It is "our righteous cause."

2. The Assembly goes farther. Not content to certify to the righteousness of one party, and the wickedness of the other, in that civil strife, it proceeds to identify the church of God itself, the purchase of Calvary, with one of the parties therein. The struggle "is not alone for civil rights, and property and home, but *for religion, for the church, for the gospel.*" The Assembly, for this reason, "records its solemn approval" of the unanimity of the people in its behalf. The very "ark of the covenant," is upborne upon the "gory flood," of the war.

3. All this was done, while emphatically denying the right of the church to meddle with politics, or determine questions of allegiance; and separating from the Northern church because of her guilt in having so done.

V. *Political Deliverances of the Northern Assemblies.*

The "Spring resolutions," of 1861, have been recognized, ever since, as a chief and adequate exemplification of the obnoxious political deliverances. It was upon occasion of them that our church assumed a separate existence. We have already seen so much of them as was exceptionable quoted in full by the Atlanta Convention. Of these resolutions Dr. Palmer asserted that the Assembly in them—

"undertook to decide, and did decide, not only a political question, but a political question that involved all other political questions; a political question so serious in its character that it had been left undetermined by the framers of the constitution of 1787, because on that day the parties engaged in constructing a republic were unable to agree upon it." Again he said: "From that day to this, those deliverances of 1861, and the years succeeding 1861, have been stored in the archives of that church as most sacred and precious testimonies, which are never to be touched. The law, therefore, of 1861, which decides the question of allegiance for the members of the southern church,—I do not speak to the deliverances, but to the right which that church claimed to make the deliverances;—this is still the law of the Presbyterian Church."

So Dr. Dabney says:

"Every argument which I advanced in 1876 and 1882 for our independence remains in full force. How can it be otherwise with a clear and honest mind, in view of this fact, when the last word of the northern Assembly spoken in their most conciliatory mood, was 'that they concede no principle;' thus they themselves bind on us the duty of continued protest, which their acts imposed on us from 1861 to '67; let the plain sum of those acts be borne in mind. It was to attempt to usurp the spiritual power of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to bind our free consciences to a secular party in the state."—*Letter to Dr. Vaughan.*

The acts, we too regard as indefensible. But do all the consequences follow, on which these brethren insist? The fact is unquestionable that in various papers adopted by the two Assemblies, Old School and New, during and immediately after the war, those Assemblies did implicate themselves with politics, and yield most unworthily to the passions and excitements of the civil conflict. In this respect, the positions of those churches and our own were precisely the same, with two exceptions: (1), They took opposite sides on the political question at issue; (2), While the northern Assemblies took the position of deeply interested and partisan *spectators*, our Assemblies identified the church as a *party* in the conflict, and urged it on their people, as the cause of religion and the gospel, as well as of patriotism.

Concerning the charge of claiming the right to decide political questions, the Assembly of 1861 defined its own position:

"That the action of the Assembly has political, as well as moral bearings, is readily admitted. So had the decision of our divine Master, when he said to the Pharisees and Herodians,—'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' a decision still binding upon all men; and underlying this very act of the Assembly. The payment of the requisite tax was both a moral and a

political duty. 'There are occasions,' says the author of an able article on The State of the Country, in the January number of the *Princeton Review*,—'there are occasions when *political* questions *rise into the sphere of morals and religion;* when the rule of political action is to be sought, not in considerations of state policy, but in the law of God.' . . . The General Assembly heartily approve these principles, and doubt not that if ever there was an occasion when political questions rose into the sphere of morals and religion, the present circumstances of our beloved country are of that character."—*Minutes*, 1861, p. 342.

Thus the Assembly, by implication, but distinctly, disavows the claim of right to interfere with politics, as such. Dr. Palmer, no doubt with reference to this statement, rightly says, "The principal claim of the Northern church is, that where politics rises into the sphere of morals, they have the right to take the matter in hand." He does not indicate how far or wherein the doctrine is false. Would he maintain that when a moral question becomes involved in politics the relation of the church to the matter ceases? What, then, becomes of our brother Vaughan's demand for a testimony as to the moral character of slavery? Must the church be silent on the seventh commandment, because polygamy in Utah is a political question? Should the primitive church have ignored the sin of idolatry, because the worship of the gods of Rome was a very important element of politics, and as such enforced by imperial authority? Or must we be silent as to the sin of intemperance, because a political prohibition party has arisen?

On this point, I have looked anxiously to the utterances of our brethren for an intelligible definition, but in vain. The Open Letter sheds no light on it; unless it means to teach that the church is not to meddle with morals at all. It tells us that—

"They at the North accepted the general truth as to the spiritual nature and functions of the church, with a wide margin of interpretation; so that whenever politics rises into the sphere of morals it is brought fairly within her jurisdiction. It does not seem to occur to them that every question which touches man in his social relations has necessarily a moral side; and that the principle avowed obliterates every line of demarcation, and sweeps everything into the domain of the church."

The inference is not self-evident. But the matter of special concern at present is the meaning of the Letter, itself, on this point. Does it deny the position which it attributes to the Northern church? Does it mean to assert that always, when moral questions become implicated with politics, the judicial relation of the church to them ceases? The question is of vital concern in this discussion. It is, by our brethren, insisted on as a cardinal dividing issue between ours and the Northern church. Such being the case, no duty can be more evident or imperative than that they should define explicitly the position which they would have us to hold on this head. It is not sufficient to tell us that "as a non-secular and non-political body, the line is to be clearly drawn between herself and the commonwealth, which no sophistry shall be allowed to obscure." This is no definition. The pressing question is: *Where* is the line to be drawn so clearly? This question is of urgent im-

portunity; to be answered before any safe conclusions can be reached; because our intense reaction from the error of the Northern Assemblies, has a natural and almost inevitable tendency to drive us to an opposite extreme, which is just as unscriptural and dangerous. If it is true, as above asserted in the Open Letter, that "every question which touches man in his social relations has necessarily a moral side," the converse is equally true, that every moral question has a social side, belonging to the political or civil sphere. And if the principle seemingly avowed by our brethren be accepted,—that we may touch nothing which has political relations,—"everything is swept" *out of* "the domain of the church." The subject is too wide for present discussion; and the laboring oar of right devolves on our brethren who insist on a line of division here. Let them trace the line, not in vague generalities, but in explicit terms "which no sophistry shall be allowed to obscure." In the meantime, as bearing intimately upon the subject, there are three things not to be forgotten.

1. If our Confession (xxxi. 4) be true, the church sustains intimate relations to civil affairs, and to the commonwealth in its relations to them—relations which are not to be ignored, but *may* justify and even require, in certain cases, interposition by way of humble petition or advice. The state is an ordinance of God, and as such not to be disparaged, but reverenced by the church as a co-operating agency for the welfare of man. So little is this view appreciated among us, that there are those who refuse to respond to the call, when the state requests the churches to become her agents in thanksgivings for God's mercies, or humiliation and prayer under his judgments! The point here presented is emphasized by the fact that, in the Open Letter, the section of the Confession above referred to is so quoted as to *leave out* the very important limitation contained in the last clause, thus essentially modifying the meaning of the article. Synods "are not to intermeddle with civil affairs, which concern the commonwealth, *unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience*, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate." That they sustain relations to the commonwealth and civil affairs, which are to be recognized, and may call for communication with the powers that be, is thus distinctly indicated.

2. The church of God is not only entrusted with the gospel, but with the law also. With profound significance, that law, engraven on stone and deposited in the ark of the covenant, was made "the testimony of Israel," and a conditional term of the covenant on which the church was founded at Sinai. With equal significance our Saviour's first discourse was an exposition of the spirituality and eternal authority of that law. And at his ascension his great commission to his church was that she should teach all nations to "observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you,"—a commission enforced by the sanction of his royal authority as having "all power in heaven and in earth." If there are any *duties* incumbent on men, in any relations, which do not derive their obligation from the royal authority of the Lord Jesus,—any

that are not embraced in the "all things" of this great commission,—will some one who is able tell us what they are? If not, how are we to understand the statements and arguments of our brethren? And here let no man confound things which so widely differ as the legitimacy of the *themes* and *subjects* of church action, and the character of the action itself.

3. Among the laws thus committed to the church was that which enjoins prayer for and obedience to "the powers that be," as "ordained of God." This our own Assembly has recognized—

"It is incumbent upon us to exhort you, brethren 'to obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.'" "The 'higher powers' now bearing rule over us are confessedly the government of the United States, and those existing in the states wherein we reside."—*Minutes*, 1865, pp. 382, 384.

Under this same law the Northern Assembly of 1861 professed to act:

"May not the highest court of our church, speaking as the interpreter of that holy law which says, 'Ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake' (Rom. xiii. 5) warn her communicants against 'resisting the ordinance of God' (Rom. xiii. 2)."—*Minutes*, 1861, p. 343.

As to the bearing of these things on the present discussion, (1), The claim of these Assemblies was *not* that they had a right to decide political questions, but to deal with moral questions, even though complicated with politics,—a claim legitimate and Scriptural, but calling for a freedom from secular prejudices and passions, and a seeking to heavenly wisdom, which those Assemblies failed to display; (2), The acts in question did not, therefore, constitute a revolutionary change of the principles of the church on the subject of the spirituality of her office and the Headship of her King; but a temporary aberration in practice from those principles; (3), As precedents, therefore, those acts may perhaps prove to be rather valuable as warnings than dangerous as incentives; because their first effect is to call attention to the recognized authority of the violated principles; the results are a beacon of warning, and the circumstances, so peculiar, can never be repeated.

It is insisted that the northern Assembly ought to express regret or repentance for the acts in question. Such action must be predicated on the identity of present Assemblies with the past, or on a judicial relation to them. But the Assemblies by which the obnoxious deliverances were made, were not perpetuated organisms, with whom their successors are identified, but temporary organizations, which after a few days' sessions were dissolved, never more to meet. Their proceedings, in so far as they were in the form of laws or standing rules, may be repealed by their successors, and to that extent, they transmit a responsibility. But otherwise, if there has been immorality or wrong doing, it attaches to the authors alone, except as others may voluntarily assume it. But not only are these Assemblies dissolved and dispersed. The venerable author of the Spring resolutions, and most of the actors in the Assemblies of those years of excitement and trouble are gone, and are now doubtless sitting in the upper house of our assembly. What, then, is the

propriety of bringing their proceedings to judicial account? Who does not instinctively revolt from the very thought of haling to our bar men who have already passed from earth and rendered account at the tribunal of Christ? No civil tribunal in the land would for one moment listen to such a proposition. If, with reference to living men, appropriate, how much more, as to these, the demand of the Spirit, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant! To his own Master he standeth or falleth." Who does not blush at the idea of assuming to stand sponser at the bar to answer for a Thornwell or a Howe, a Spring or a Breckinridge, to make confession of offenses which they never acknowledged, and avow regrets which they never professed? By what right shall the Assembly of 1888 cite the Assembly of 1861 or 1864 to its bar, to answer whether its acts were all done in righteousness? "The less," says Paul, "is blessed of the better." And certainly the less is *judged* of the better. But where do present Assemblies acquire that superiority over those that are past which shall qualify or authorize them to fulfil that office! How much better entitled are we than were they to represent the church? If it be said that we represent the church as it now is,—did not they as adequately represent the church as it then was? And why is it necessary to us to disparage and dishonor our predecessors in order to define our own position? And, suppose it done, what is accomplished? Is it any the less true that the former Assemblies took such action; or, that they approved what they did? Or, is our own righteousness any the more evident? One thing, and but one, can be accomplished by such a proceeding. The church of Christ is dishonored, by the unseemliness of our assumption, on the one hand, and by the disparagement done to our fathers on the others.

All this is the more signally evident, when it is proposed that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as now constituted, shall undertake a review and censure of the acts and deliverances of the two bodies out of which it was formed. Not only has the annual succession of Assemblies precluded a continuous identity, but by the reunion, a new organization has been created, identical with neither of its constituents; so that, even to enable it to hold the property which they had acquired, special legislation was necessary. Were there, therefore, no other objection to the demand in question, this, of the solution of identity in the church is conclusive. It is asserted that this is a mere quibble. It is no quibble, but an unanswerable fact. Who does not see that if it had been proposed that, by virtue of the union, the newly constituted body should be authorized to take up the records of either of the branches and pass judgment upon the propriety, integrity and righteousness of its proceedings, such a proposition would have been rejected infallibly? Or, were all obstacles removed and we reunited with the Northern church, does any one imagine that the reunited body would be obliged or entitled, in reason or in justice, to review our records, and to make confession and repentance for our utterances of 1861 to 1864? The Constitution gives no such authority. Sound morals

forbid it. No party to the treaty of union dreamed of it. And any attempt to exercise it would be at once inexcusable and grossly absurd. It is enough that the church of the present maintain right principles for herself, without assuming gratuitously to sit in judgment upon the obsolete acts of those who are gone.

The force of the argument from the solution of identity by the union of the churches was, for a different purpose, clearly recognized by an anonymous writer with whom Dr. Palmer may be acquainted. In view of the communication made to our Assembly by the Old School Assembly in May, 1869, a series of articles was published in the *South Western Presbyterian*, and then in pamphlet form. Referring to the reunion which was about to be consummated between the Old and New School, the writer said:

"When the Southern Assembly, in May next, shall give respectful attention to this overture, it will look in vain, through air, earth and sea, for the body to whom its reply shall be addressed! The echo lingers lovingly on the ear, but, alas!

'The voice hath passed away,
Whence music, like sweet waters, gushed
But yesterday.'

The venerable court from which it issued has no longer a separate corporate existence; and survives only as a constituent of a new and larger body, which can have no jurisdiction over the measure thus initiated."—*Pamphlet edition*, p. 10.

The reunited Assembly of 1870 cured the defect, by endorsing the overture of '69. But the argument of this writer is sound, and the application to the present case is evident. The Assembly now certainly has no more jurisdiction over the offensive deliverances of 1861–'65, than had that of 1870 over the friendly overture of 1869.

But it is asserted that those obnoxious deliverances "have been stored in the archives of that church as most sacred and precious testimonies, which are never to be touched." Upon what ground Dr. Palmer makes this assertion, I am at a loss to imagine. Dr. Dabney gives the semblance of proof. It consists in the fact that the Northern Assembly, "in their most conciliatory mood," declared "that they concede no principle." Does not Dr. Dabney know that the phrase which he thus uses was dictated to the Northern Assembly by ours, with Dr. Smoot in the chair? But that Assembly has made some utterances, of its own motion, which have a direct bearing on this question. First, is the Concurrent Declaration adopted by the two Assemblies, preliminary to the reunion in 1869.

"No *rule* or *precedent*, which does not stand approved by both the bodies, shall be of any authority until re-established in the united body, except in so far as such rule or precedent may affect the rights of property founded thereon."

It has been denied that this was designed to apply to, or really includes, the political deliverances of which we complain. Such denial can hardly be

made with decency, in the presence of the express testimony of their Committee, in conference with ours, in Baltimore, that such was one design of the article. I can affirm, from personal knowledge, that this testimony is true, that one argument used in favor of the reunion of the Old and New School was that it would remove the war records out of the way. The reunited Assembly, moreover, in measures looking to correspondence with us, has repeatedly cited that Article as obliterating those obnoxious deliverances. (See *Minutes*, 1870, p. 18; 1873, p. 502.) It has thus *given it all the force so attributed to it*. It is said that the deliverances were not "rules," and therefore are not within the meaning of the Concurrent Declaration. The alternative is that, as rules or *precedents*, they were annulled by it, or that, as mere historic facts, the responsibility attached to and remained with their authors.

Again, the various articles of our Confession relating to the spirituality of our church, its relation to the civil magistrate, and the Headship of the Lord Jesus, have been repeatedly cited by that Assembly, and attested in most emphatic terms as expressing her testimony on the subject. Especially in response to a memorial from the Rev. Dr. James H. Brookes and others, in which these are set forth, with reference to the war-time violations of them, and the action on the Declaration and Testimony, the Assembly of 1874 said:

"Whereas, certain brethren belonging to the Old School Presbyterian Synod of Missouri have overtured this Assembly, stating their principles regarding the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and the proper jurisdiction of church courts in things ecclesiastical only, and in these according to the Word of God, together with their firm adherence to our Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Form of Government and Book of Discipline; be it

"*Resolved*, That this Assembly cordially accept this overture, as exhibiting the principles of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and consider all actions of the church in the past, if any, which may have been done contrary to these principles, to be null and void."

"*All actions, if any, which may have been done contrary to these principles null and void.*"

But, says Dr. Palmer:

"The General Assembly cannot pass any paper proclaiming their belief in the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, which shall be stronger and clearer than the statements made by the standards which they recognize. And if they can maintain a consistency with the language of those standards and their right to pronounce a political decree, then they are able to interpret all other *in thesi* deliverances and maintain any interpretation consistent they may desire, and to the extent of their desire."

We may not, therefore, trust their professions. On this point, but three remarks are necessary. (1) There is an essential difference between a claim of right to make political decrees, and a claim to make deliverances on moral questions which have political relations. The latter claim alone, those Assemblies ever made; and brethren who discuss the subject should observe

the distinction. (2.) Dr. Palmer gives no proof that the northern Assembly, as now constituted by the union, has made any claim whatsoever respecting the political questions referred to; and in fact, such proof does not exist. (3.) The gross inconsistency of our northern brethren of 1861 to 1865, in professedly adhering to the doctrine of the church's spirituality, while so grievously violating it in practice, is no new or strange thing, and for its explanation requires no occult principle for interpreting their adoption of the standards. The same phenomenon is illustrated in our own Assembly, in 1861, with Dr. Palmer in the chair, issuing the circular letter in defense of the crown rights of the Lord Jesus, and then setting apart a season for solemn prayer for the Confederate cause. One explanation will solve all the phenomena of that nature, north and south, during all those years of temptation and crime. It is, the weakness of poor human nature. And the conclusion of candor will be, that our brethren of the northern Assembly, in their present professed adherence to the spiritual doctrines of our standards, are just as worthy of confidence as are we. As to the charge that the northern church has stored the war deliverances in her archives, as precious things never to be touched, the facts here presented are the only proof. Or, is the statement merely the highly rhetorical style in which Dr. Palmer would inform us that by the Concurrent Declaration they have been consigned to oblivion, never more to be brought to light?

VI. *Comparative Demerits of the two Records.*

Upon the rejection by our Assembly, in 1870, of the fraternal overture from the Northern Assembly, Dr. Palmer, as chairman of the Committee on Correspondence, reported to the Assembly a Pastoral Letter in vindication of that action. It was adopted and published, and bears such relation to the present argument as to demand recognition here. In it is the following statement:

"The attempt has been made to relieve the pressure of these melancholy facts [the political doings of the Northern church] by faintly retorting the accusation against our own body. But we challenge the world to place the two records side by side in the severity of contrast. No ingenuity can transmute into political dogmas the scant allusions to the historical reality of a great struggle then pending; or the thankful recognition, in the middle of a paragraph, of the unanimity with which an invaded people rose to the defence of their hearthstones and the graves of their dead; or the pastoral counsels addressed to the members and youth of our own churches, passing through the temptations and perils of the camp and field; or the half hour spent in prayer for a land bleeding under the iron heel of war; or even the incidental declaration in a narrative, to stand by an institution of the country, a traditional inheritance from our fathers. Even though, from the ambiguity of human language, these chance references may not have been always discreetly expressed, the most that a just criticism could pronounce is that they are inconsistent with the judicially pronounced principle upon which the Southern Assembly entered upon its troubled career. And when exaggerated to their largest proportions by all the prejudice of bitter partisanship,

they dwindle into motes and specks, by the side of the elaborate and colossal deliverances, repeated each year, through formal committees, and exalted into solemn testimonies co-ordinate with the doctrines of religion and of faith, which disfigure the legislation of both the Northern Assemblies through successive years."

In reading this statement, we are almost swept away by the irresistible force and movement of the rhetoric. But, in the midst of the torrent, relief comes, in the admission that a just criticism *may* pronounce that the utterances in question "*are inconsistent with the judicially pronounced principle*" upon which the Southern church is founded. Dr. Palmer seems to think this fact some palliation of the admitted offenses. Is it not rather the reverse? Being, by the providence of God, forced into an emphatic recognition and testimony of the spiritual office of the church, is not this an aggravation of the offense committed, in so soon forgetting the testimony thus signally entrusted to her, and violating the principle for the vindication of which she was separated and ordained? But my friend will not admit that the offense was very grievous. The iron heel of war was on the land. Fathers, brothers and sons were in the strife and exposed to hardships and death. Cherished institutions were at stake; and in these circumstances of anxiety and excitement, things were said and done that were clearly in violation of our principles. But in all this our Assembly did not mean to be unfaithful, or to act outside her proper sphere. She had no intention to meddle with politics, to ally herself with the state, or to surrender her crown to Cæsar. True! most assuredly true! If now Dr. Palmer will exercise toward the Northern church one-half the charity which he holds due to our own, the difficulty is at an end.

But no. Our exceptionable utterances are mere "chance references," and they "dwindle into motes and specks, by the side of those elaborate and colossal deliverances" of the Northern church. It makes a material difference, through which end of the telescope we look. It would seem in this passage to have been reversed. What is here meant by the contrast of "motes and specks" and "colossal deliverances" I do not understand. Let us remember what is the subject of inquiry and comparison. It is not the arrogant and vituperative style in which unhappily some of the northern deliverances are couched. It is not the emphasis of the language, nor the length nor number of the documents. It is nothing but the fact that the one Assembly and the other gave utterance to sentiments which involved political questions. The other Assemblies, Old School and New, pronounced the cause of the general government just, and the confederacy a wicked rebellion. Our own recorded its "solemn approval" of the unanimity of the people in supporting the Confederacy, and declared that religion, the gospel and the church of God, as well as patriotism, were enlisted in the cause,—that the very "ark of the covenant" was afloat on the tide. These were no chance references. Both meant to be understood, and were understood by all the world. The questions decided by them were the very same. The only difference between them was that the decisions were mutually opposed. How, except by the reversed

telescope of partisan prejudice they can be seen in contrast, the one a mote, and the other a colossal spectre, who can explain?

But our premises,—while seemingly conceded, by the admission that the deliverances in question are "inconsistent with the judicially pronounced principle" of the spirituality of the church,—are, nevertheless, most emphatically denied. "No ingenuity can transmute into political dogmas" the deliverances of our Assembly. In the alembic of Dr. Palmer's rhetoric, the most "*solemn*," full and formal testimonies of approval of the Confederate cause are transmuted into mere "chance references," "scant allusions." A long paragraph with its formal heading prefixed in italics,—"*The relation of our congregations to the great struggle in which we are engaged*,"—becomes a thankful recognition, "in the middle of a paragraph," of the unanimity of the people in the war; and a special service of prayer "for the cause of the Confederate States," becomes a mere nothing; "a half hour;" as though it would require perhaps days spent in such an exercise, to determine its meaning. The facts are before the reader.

VII. *The Political Spirit here Evinced.*

The most surprising thing in the foregoing is the seeming unconsciousness of the writer to the fact that the very foundation of his argument and apology is a partisan *political assumption*. If the Confederate cause was right,—here defined as "the defense of their hearthstones and the graves of their dead," by "an invaded people,"—If the church may use that political plea, his argument is pertinent, as palliating the admitted offenses. But if secession was *not* righteous,—and who shall decide that point?—or, if the church may not urge that plea,—the argument fails. The defense therefore plainly rests on a *political dogma*, and in adopting it the Assembly was again unwittingly betrayed into the very crime which our church so sternly condemns of entering on the political arena. Not only was she made to decide the political question there disputed, but to stake her own justification on the truth of the dogma so decided! May the Northern church use the same privilege?

The same fatal impeachment holds against the indictment framed by Dr. Palmer in our late Assembly, as already quoted, against the Spring resolutions. Stated in syllogistic form, it stands thus: The framers of the Constitution of the United States left the political question, as to where the paramount sovereignty was lodged, undecided, because they could not agree upon it. The General Assembly of 1861 decided it. Therefore that Assembly decided an open political question. But where does our brother get his major premise? And where shall our Assembly find warrant for accepting it? Certainly not in the charter of the church, the Word of God. Nor is it predicable upon common consent. The great Federal party, who, under the presidency of Washington, gave first form and character to the policy of the government, did not so interpret the constitution. Nor can he appeal to that states rights party, which, pending the adoption of the constitution, opposed it on the very ground that it settled this question in favor of the general government. Said Patrick Henry, in the convention of Virginia:

"I would make inquiry of those worthy characters who composed a part of the late federal convention. I am sure they were fully impressed with the necessity of forming a great consolidated government, instead of a confederation. That this is a consolidated government is demonstrably clear, and the danger of such a government is to my mind very striking. I have the highest veneration for those gentlemen. But, sir, give me leave to demand, What right had they to say, '*We, the people?*' My political curiosity, exclusive of my anxious solicitude for the public welfare, leads me to ask, Who authorized them to speak the language of '*We, the people,*' instead of '*We, the states?*' States are the characteristics and the soul of a confederation. If the states be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great consolidated national government of all the people of all the states."—*Elliott's Debates*, iii., 22.

It is not my business to vindicate Henry's views. It is enough that the facts show how far Dr. Palmer's major premise is from being axiomatic. The utmost that can be pretended on that behalf is, that the point is disputed. And yet our brother's judgment is so controlled by the theory of states' rights, to which we have seen his early and profound committal, that he frames his charges against the Northern church so that they must stand or fall with that theory,—so frames them that, to convict her, our Assembly must first commit the very same offense. We must take up the Constitution of the United States and decide against the majority from the beginning that it does *not* determine the question of sovereignty! The same radical error vitiates the argument of the Open Letter.

This political bias, entering into and controlling their views on this whole subject, seems to be a characteristic of the brethren to whom we are here opposed. It appears in Dr. Smoot's arraignment of the Northern church, respecting her Boards:—

"The spirit that has overridden the Constitution of the United States since the war is the same that has overridden the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church. It is that spirit that has desolated and ruined this country."

We have seen the stern indignation with which Dr. Dabney rebuked the Assembly of 1861, for violating the spiritual law of the church, and the facility with which, in the same sentence, he invited and induced the Synod to commit the same offense, by ranging itself on the side of the Confederacy. In his recent letter to Dr. Vaughan, there is no attempt to conceal or suppress the undiminished intensity of the same political bias. Just as in the Synod of Virginia, so now again he denounces the Assembly's violation of the spiritual law of her constitution. But it is only when he comes to speak of the particular politics to the advantage of which the Assembly's action inured that his highest indignation is aroused. Those who share the intensity of the sentiments of these brethren on past political issues may not appreciate the significance of these things. But with all their undoubted devotion to the spiritual beauty and glory of God's house, our brethren's views, on the question now so profoundly interesting the church, seem unmistakably pervaded and controlled by these sentiments—by partialities and

prejudices, secular and political. And in so far as our church shall accept those sentiments, and pursue the policy inspired by them, she will stoop from the lofty position to which she has aspired. She may still imagine herself the sole and honored witness for the crown of the Lord Jesus, and the spirituality of his kingdom; but her actual and peculiar distinction will be that of legatee and custodian of the principles and affiliations of an obsolete political party. Says Paul, "Our politics (*politeuma*) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. iv. 20.) These words certainly indicate something more than the duty of carefulness to avoid giving formal expression to political sentiments on the records of church courts.

VIII. *The Walnut Street Church Case.*

Akin to the charge of political intermeddling by the Northern Church, is that concerning the Walnut Street Church case. It was referred to in our Assembly, and has been emphasized by the significance attributed to it by our brother Dabney. What was the portentous decision which he conceives to have enthroned the Northern Assembly as pope over the church? Concerning it, however, he neglects to observe the fact that it just as much exalts our own Assembly. The decision was made by the Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of the Walnut Street Church, Louisville, Kentucky, upon appeal from the Circuit Court. Its whole significance is summed in a single paragraph, which follows an elaborate citation of authorities. Says the court:

"We cannot better close this review of the authorities than in the language of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in the case of the German Reformed Church *vs.* Siebert, 5 Barr, 291. 'The decisions of ecclesiastical courts, like every other judicial tribunal, are final, as they are the best judges of what constitutes an offense against the word of God and the discipline of the church. Any other than those courts must be incompetent judges of matters of faith, discipline and doctrine; and civil courts, if they should be so unwise as to attempt to supervise their judgments on matters which come within their jurisdiction, would only involve themselves in a sea of uncertainty and doubt, which would do anything but improve either religion or good morals.'"—*Presbyterian Digest*, 1886, p. 261.

Such is the length and breadth of the Walnut Street Church decision. It determines that, so long as the ecclesiastical courts confine themselves to questions of the teachings of God's word and the discipline of the church, they are independent of the civil courts—their decisions are final.

But, says Dr. Dabney, this makes the Assembly a pope; and it may go astray. And the property at least should be under the supervision of the state. A pope!—That is, the church, by its chosen representatives, in Assembly, is pope over itself. This is the grievance! Thus the question, as expressly stated by Dr. Dabney, is that of *papacy*—of supremacy over the visible church. To whom does it of right belong? She has been entrusted with certain properties for the furtherance of the gospel; and, says our brother, "It is the solemn duty of the secular court to decide whether the agreed church covenant of this voluntary association is, or is not, perverted in the

use of the trust." "The agreed church covenant" is the Constitution of the church, deduced from the word of God; and it is "the solemn duty" of the secular court to decide whether "the voluntary association," the church of the living God, is true to that covenant! It must decide whether she is maintaining in its integrity the true Presbyterian order of the Constitution! It must inquire and decide what is the true sense of the standards, and of the word of God,—the authority of which they recognize as paramount,—as to the doctrines of grace; what teachings do, and what do not, impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system; and whether that system has been corrupted and the covenant thus "perverted"! And its decision on these points are to be enforced by the alienation of her property from the refractory church! And this is Dr. Dabney's conception of a "free church in a free commonwealth"! But he insists that the church may err from the truth and pervert the funds; and it is therefore necessary that the state have an oversight of the matter. And, for this miserable mess of pottage our brother would sell our birthright! True, the church may go astray. Too often has she wandered. But is Cæsar more trustworthy? Is he better qualified for the papacy—better fitted to be vicegerent over the church? And is this the contention of brethren who are so jealous for the crown rights of the Lord Jesus?—Aroused to the highest pitch of indignation at the Northern Church for giving expression to political sentiments which implied alliance with the state and betrayal of Christ's crown; then equally indignant at the decree which secures to that church and to ours independence of Cæsar's yoke; and at the Assembly, for the satisfaction with which it made record of that decree!

The English precedents to which Dr. Dabney refers, in support of his views, belong to that system of church and state union to which a true conception of religious liberty and church autonomy is incongruous and incomprehensible. Of the particulars of the Hicksite case I know nothing. But the full report of the Presbyterian Church case is before me. It was an issue between two bodies, the Old School and the New, each claiming to be the true lineal succession of the church, and the discussion and decision turned altogether on such technical points as went to determine the parliamentary order of succession. Judge Rogers, at *Nisi Prius*, was indeed disposed to wander into a discussion of the merits of the Assembly's action. At the same time he distinctly repudiated the claim to such authority, and instructed the jury that Mr. Cleveland had a parliamentary right to move the question to oust Dr. Elliott from the chair, and that therefore the body organized under that motion held the true succession of the Assembly. The court, *In Bank*, by Judge Gibson, decided that Dr. Elliott could not be so removed, and that the Assembly organized through him therefore held the succession. Except as bearing on this point, of lineal identity, the court, *In Bank*, made no attempt to decide upon the propriety or constitutionality of any act of the Assembly. There was no hint of question as to its fidelity to the church covenant. On the contrary, that court decided that

"It would be sufficient for the civil tribunal, that the assembled commissioners had constituted an actual body, and that it had made its appointment (of trustees) in its own way, *without regard to its fairness in respect to its own members;* with this limitation, however, that it had the assent of the constitutional majority, of which the official act of authentication would be, at least, *prima facie* evidence. It would be immaterial to the legality of the choice that the majority had expelled the minority, provided a majority of the whole body concurred in the choice. This may be safely predicated of an undivided Assembly; and it would be an unerring test, in the case of a division, could a quorum not be constituted of less than such a majority; but, unfortunately, a quorum of the General Assembly may be constituted of a very small minority, so that two, or even more, distinct parts may have all the external organs of legitimate existence. Hence, where, as in this instance, the members have formed themselves into separate bodies, numerically sufficient for corporate capacity and organic action, it becomes necessary to ascertain how far either of them was *formed in obedience to the conventional law of the association*, which, for that purpose only, is to be treated as a rule of civil obligation." Again, "We have no authority to adjudge its (the Assembly's) judgments on their merits; and this principle was asserted with conclusive force by the presiding judge (Rogers) who tried the cause. 'With the reasons for the proceedings of 1837 (the act of excision), we have nothing to do. We are to determine only what was done; the reasons of those who did it are immaterial. If the acts complained of were within the jurisdiction of the Assembly, *their decision must be final, though they decided wrong.*'" (*Miller's Report*, pp. 587, 591.)

All this is precisely in the line of the Walnut Street Church decision. Of the latter, Dr. Dabney, says: It is to the credit of the Supreme Court, that this revolution was decreed by a bare majority,—even Chief Justice Chase, partisan as he was, declining his sanction." The statement is wholly inaccurate. The Chief Justice did not decline his sanction. He did not sit on the case at all! He may have been sick, or otherwise engaged. Justices Clifford and Davis gave no opinion upon the merits, because they denied the jurisdiction of the court, on account of a prior suit, in a state court of concurrent jurisdiction. The remaining six justices,—Nelson, Swayne, Miller, Field, Bradley and Strong,—*were unanimous*. The decision may have resulted in the alienation of valuable property from its rightful owners. Of that I know nothing. But the independence of the church, thus judicially decreed, is of more value than ten thousand times all the property that can have been involved. With unfeigned respect for Dr. Dabney be it said,—*Thanks be to God for the Walnut Street Church decision!*

IX. *The Declaration and Testimony.*

The Open Letter seeks to use the Declaration and Testimony, the transactions therewith connected, and the reception of the Synod of Kentucky into our church, as a barrier between us and the northern church. Respecting this point but few things need be said.

1. The Declaration and Testimony, and all the transactions relating to it, belong to the history of the Old School church, prior to the reunion, and in that respect come under the same category as the political deliverances of that body, for which the reunited church cannot be held responsible.

2. The reunited Assembly, in 1874, received an overture from the Rev. Dr. James H. Brooks, (one of the originators of the Declaration and Testimony,) and others, in which all the grievances in connection with that paper were stated, together with the scriptural principles which were therein violated. The response of the Assembly has been already quoted above, and resulted in the reunion of those brethren with the Assembly.

3. As to any covenant on the subject as a basis of union between the Synod of Kentucky and our Assembly, the latter had no authority to make any such covenant other than the Constitution itself. It did not attempt anything of the kind; and had it done so, our church would most assuredly refuse to be bound, by such usurpation. The constitution is our only covenant and bond.

4. Touching the merits of the Declaration and Testimony, and its bearing upon the interests of the church, north and south, there is an interesting and significant unwritten history, were this the place to unfold it.

X. *Results of our Discussion.*

This discussion has not been pursued in the interest of the reunion of the churches. On that subject, as matters now stand, I have no zeal. But the attitude and policy toward the Northern church, which, with no essential modification since the war, we have still pursued,—the reserve, distrust and hostility,—are a legacy from times when it was not possible, humanly speaking, that the tranquil voice of impartial reason should be heard with patience. For a brief year the treaty of 1882 seemed to promise a new departure. But the next year, the revived energy of the hostile policy converted the begun fraternal intercourse of personal delegates into an annual expression of coldness and distrust, by the interchange of measured salutations in writing. The movement of last fall shows the church, or at least a vast number of her ministers and people, to believe that the whole subject demands reconsideration in the clearer light and calmer atmosphere of the present day. Common sense would conclude that, in the two sections of the Presbyterian church in this land, divided by sectional political strife on sectional lines, the average integrity, piety, and intelligent consecration to the testimony and service of her Master, must be about the same; and a candid comparison of records and history down to the present time will confirm the conclusion. In this paper the main arguments relied on in reprobation of the Northern church have been examined. It has appeared (1), That the agitation as to the Boards is simply a mistake, transferring to the present time conditions and arrangements which have been obsolete for years; (2), That, on the slavery question, there is no issue on which we can take hold: (3), That the union of the Old School with the New, so far from sacrificing the testimonies of '37 and '38, confirmed and established them, by the common authority of the reunited church.

Could we take up the history of that church since the reunion was consummated, and examine it with reference to this point, the conclusion would be

fully confirmed. Or, if any one questions the truth of this statement, let him point out the case in which broad church principles have been recognized in the interpretation of the constitution by any court of the Northern church. Let him cite the instance in which that church has been unfaithful to the standards, in judicial dealing with error. Let him institute a comparison between that church and our own as to the tolerance of deadly errors. The subject is one of delicacy which I will not pursue.

As to the political deliverances, the following points have been established: (1.) Notwithstanding the imperious terms of denial, the facts remain, that we are guilty, in the same thing, and to the full extent of the northern offenses. (2.) On neither side was there any intentional or actual revolutionary abandonment of constitutional principles, but only temporary aberrations in practice, which were incident to the weakness and corruption of human nature in its present partially sanctified state, amid the excitement and distraction of times when the pillars of the state trembled, and the social fabric was threatened with dissolution. (3.) The Northern Assemblies did not claim, as is asserted, a right to make political decrees; but, a right to act upon moral questions, even though complicated with politics;—a claim unquestionably scriptural, and the exercise of which cannot by anticipation be regulated by precise rules, but must of necessity be left to the judgment and discretion of the church courts, in view of the particular cases and complications as they arise, and under the prayerful guidance of God's Spirit of wisdom. (4.) That church, as now constituted, sustains no such relation to those past transactions as to call for, or justify, a censure of them; and it has done all that we can reasonably require to obliterate them, and testify its fidelity to the principles which they transgressed.

Respecting the Walnut Street Church case, we have found that the decision was simply an assertion of the church's rightful independence of state supervision and control in matters ecclesiastical.

A review of the whole discussion leads to the following conclusions: *First*, The lack of proof to sustain the most of the charges made against the Northern church; the inconsiderate haste with which they have been seized and urged, without investigation or evidence; the extremes to which those have been pressed which have any foundation, and the strange use made of the Walnut Street Church case, demonstrate a sad forgetfulness of that fervent charity to the whole blood-bought church of Christ, of tenderness toward her faults, and zeal for her honor and usefulness, which becomes the people of God. It proves the real, however unconscious, activity of influences altogether foreign to the love of the Spirit and zeal for the cause of truth and righteousness. *Second*, The nature of the arguments employed, as we have seen, and the whole history and circumstances, unite in identifying those influences as beyond question political in their origin and nature, relics of the bitterness of the late civil war; and their whole tendency, as bearing on present questions, is to constitute our church the legatee and champion of political principles which have not even the dignity of a place among

the living issues of the day! *Third*, The intense reaction which our church has realized against Northern aberrations in politics has, naturally, almost inevitably, developed a tendency to an opposite extreme, equally erroneous and mischievous,—a tendency to ignore and deny duties of the church in the sphere of morals and civil relations which are of Scriptural and imperative obligation, the repudiation or disregard of which will essentially mar the spiritual beauty and efficiency of the church.

We have now examined the materials and construction of the platform which brethren, beloved and honored, take their stand and announce to the Assembly and the church their intention, should their views not prevail, to separate themselves from us, and though they should be but three or four, to claim to be the true succession of the church, and take possession of her name, her institutions and her funds. And all this in an ardor of indignation against the soiling of the purity of the church by meddling with secular affairs and politics!—all in the fervor of zeal for the spirituality of the church, its seclusion from all political affiliations and carnal entanglements!

Shall our church yield herself to the sentiments and policy thus emphasized? Shall she, wrapped in the consciousness of superior merit, repudiate the heaven-born fellowship of the saints, and turning her back on our brethren of the Northern church, address her in the language of old embalmed by the prophet, "Stand by thyself! Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou!" Does it not rather become us to put aside, once and forever, the seductive idea of our own excelling virtue, to suppress the disposition to disparage our brethren, who hold the same precious faith, and cease our search for arguments to justify our antipathies? Is it not full time that we begin rather to seek the things that make for peace and mutual edification; that we embrace with open hand the fellowship so cordially tendered us, and forgetting past strifes, indulge in no other than the noble emulation of being foremost in the great conflict with the powers of darkness for the advancement of Immanuel's cause.

Weighty reasons forbid a hasty pressure toward reunion. The lack of mutual knowledge, so signally illustrated on our part, in the disturbance caused by the chimera of the Boards, and our appointment of a committee to investigate it,—the absence, alas! of mutual affection and confidence, the perplexing question as to the status of the negro, on which we may not now enter; the fact that possibly the Northern church may not be quite ready to welcome our coming,—these and other considerations admonish us to hasten slowly, so far as reunion is concerned. Possibly it may be for the advancement of Christ's cause that we do not unite at all; but, arm in arm, co-operate in the great work entrusted to the church in these days of world-wide testimony. But what is there to justify jealousy and crimination? What is there to forbid the cultivation of mutual confidence and affection? Why should there be strife between us? Are we not brethren?

SAMUEL J. BAIRD.

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